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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the new role that the University of Pittsburgh External Studies Program is creating for curriculum specialists. Different skills and competences are required for the curriculum coordinator who helps professors individualize their courses. interpersonal and communications skills and special techniques and procedures are needed to elicit from the discipline expert the elements of his subject area necessary to structure individualized modules under the Process Individualization Curriculum (PIC) model without altering the substance and unique flavor of the course. (MJM)

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THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM SPECIALIST IN AN UNTRADITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

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THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM SPECIALIST IN AN UNTRADITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

One of the needs that higher educational institutions are attempting to meet during the Seventies is that of alternative modes of study for what has been called the "nontraditional" student.[1] As a result of this need in Western Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburgh has developed the University External Studies Program (UESP). One of the most distinctive features of this Program is its instructional component. In UESP, the faculty member works with a curriculum specialist to develop instructional materials that employ methods appropriate for the external student. The faculty member or members work with one or more curriculum specialists as a developmental team, the content expertise being provided by the faculty member and the curriculum design expertise by the curriculum specialist.

This paper will examine the role of the curriculum specialist in UESP in terms of situational forces which differ from those encountered by the traditional curriculum specialist. First, the three major components of the instructional design task at UESP will be described: the design model, the faculty member, and the curriculum specialist. The author will then examine the traditional role of the curriculum specialist and identify characteristics of that role relevant to the subsequent analysis of the role of UESP curriculum specialist. The purpose of the analysis is to identify how situational forces affect the specialist's role in the design of curricular materials at the higher education level.

NATURE AND COMPONENTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT TASK

The Design Model

In UESP, the instructional design model that has been selected for use is the Process Model for the Individualization of Curricula (PIC). This model was developed by Doris T. Gow at the Learning Research and Development Center in Pittsburgh and is a highly structured research-based model for use in the design and development of individualized instruction. Successful implementation of this model requires, in addition to subject matter expertise, skills in both learning and instructional theory and in the application of curriculum design principles and methods. In UESP, as mentioned above, the faculty member provides the content expertise and the curriculum specialist the instructional design expertise in the team development effort required for each course offered through this Program.

The Faculty Member

Faculty members who design and teach UESP courses are drawn from among the regular university faculty and from various discipline areas depending on the specific course to be designed. Existing on-campus courses are selected for offering through UESP on the basis of student need and Program goals and capabilities.[2] The typical UESP faculty member is recognized as highly competent in the particular subject matter or discipline that he or she represents. Frequently, however, the faculty member has had little or no experience in the highly structured type of curriculum design required for the external studies student who will be required to complete college level work that is comparable to that of the on-campus student but will meet with the instructor and other students on campus only three times during a term.

Whereas the instructor traditionally can adapt to specific student needs during the course of instruction, in the external mode of education adaptive methods must be built into the course design since the students' "interaction" will be primarily through the instructional materials. This situation requires a high degree of specification in terms of course goals and objectives, relevant content and skills and specific student procedures and alternatives in anticipation of the diverse needs and experiences of the external student.

In addition, the UESP student is different characteristically from the typical on-campus student in terms of age, work experience, motivation and current lifestyle. Although some faculty members have taught through Pitt's School of General Studies, the evening school, most have had little experience with the adult "off-campus" student. This faculty member, therefore, will frequently be unable to draw upon a pool of experience in order to identify the content and process needs of the external student population.

Finally, typical university faculty members have become accustomed to the independent design and offering of courses in their own discipline areas. They have seldom been involved in a team development situation and therefore are unaccustomed to working with a process specialist and assuming a role as a member of a curriculum team. Frequently, the faculty member is even uncertain as to the nature of the skills and expertise of the curriculum specialist.

In summary, the faculty component of the UESP development team is relatively inexperienced in the following areas that are required by the nature of the developmental situation:

1. Highly structured curriculum design requiring selection and specification of all course components and procedures.
2. Recognition of the instructional needs and characteristics of the adult off-campus student and the selection of appropriate instructional strategies and methods for that student population and for the external delivery system.
3. Procedures and methods for productive and effective participation as a member of a team curriculum development effort.

The Curriculum Specialist

The major task of the curriculum specialist in UESP is to provide curriculum design expertise to the development effort and to coordinate the developmental process so that courses are designed that enable successful student completion and that meet the administrative needs of the Program. The skills required by the curriculum specialist in this situation are extensive both in terms of curriculum design skills required and in terms of the coordinating capabilities necessary for the task. (See Appendix A).

Traditional Curriculum Specialist Roles

The types of positions held by the curriculum specialist have traditionally been in public school systems[3], in R & D centers[4] or in the curriculum departments of colleges and universities. Positions also exist in state or federal educational organizations and with special projects in those organizations. Most frequently, the curriculum specialist in these situations is also a content or subject matter expert in addition to being skilled in the theory and practice of curriculum design. In the R & D centers, for example, the curriculum expert is usually a project member and has been selected for both content and process skills in the specific project discipline. Occasionally, the curriculum specialist in the public school system serves as a curriculum

"coordinator" or "designer" and in that event the emphasis in usually with the selection and evaluation of curricular materials rather than on specific content expertise or process application skills. It is interesting to note that, although these positions exist in the Allegheny County area of Pittsburgh, there is currently in the state of Pennsylvania, no certification for such roles.[5]

A recent survey that was conducted by Helen Hazi at the University of Pittsburgh asked graduates from the department of Curriculum and Supervision to identify the type of positions they now hold.[6] The following table summarizes some preliminary data from that study.

Job Classification	Number of responses *
1. Teacher (public schools)	11
2. Administrator (public schools)	11
3. Curriculum Coordinator	4
4. Supervisor	2
5. Other	8
6. Unemployed	2

* Note: Those of 45 respondents who checked more than one category are not included in these frequencies.

TABLE 1: JOB CLASSIFICATION OF RECENT GRADUATES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM & SUPERVISION.

It is important to note that only two of the persons who responded to this survey were employed at the higher education level. Most were working in K-12 grade levels in public school districts.

A final characteristic of the traditional specialist role to be identified concerns the professional "status" of the role as seen by coworkers. In the public school positions described above, the specialist is seen as having expertise beyond that of the teachers with whom he or she works; it is a type of administrative or superivsory position

and therefore carries with it a certain degree of both supervisory and "expert" authority. The same is true for the specialist in the R & D center or in special agencies where the specialist is in either a Project Director role, supervising the effort, or in a Project Assistant role working rather independently on a particular segment of it. In any case, the specialist is seen by coworkers as having some valuable expertise and authority in any development effort.

The point to be made in this review of the traditional curriculum specialist role is that:

a) the role has traditionally been, in fact, a sub-role that presupposes specific content expertise in the curriculum area; or,

b) the role has stressed skills in curriculum analysis, evaluation and selection rather than in the actual design and development of curricular materials;

c) the role has been most apparent in curriculum design for secondary education and is relatively nonexistant in post-secondary continuing education; and

d) the traditional role carries both expert and supervisory status of some degree in the professional relationship with coworkers.

THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM SPECIALIST IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The analysis involved in comparing the traditional role of the specialist with that of the specialist in this particular higher education setting at UESP reveals several key issues that will be addressed here. The purpose of this analysis is to further specify the elements or component forces of these issues as a first step in further delineation of the specific requisite skills and the role definition for the curriculum specialist in UESP. In discussing these issues with other curriculum specialists in similar roles in higher education, the writer recognized that the basic concerns presented here are more relevant to specialists in other continuing education settings

than to those in fairly traditional curriculum specialist positions. The distinguishing factor seems to be that the newer continuing higher education positions require the curriculum specialist to work with university faculty members and content experts in the actual design of curricular products. The basis for the impact of this distinction will hopefully become clearer as these issues are discussed.

ISSUE #1: The Nature of the Student Population and Instructional Theory and Development

Since external higher education programs are a relatively new concept in the growing field of continuing adult education[7], the student population for such a program is one previously unrepresented in the field of education. UESP assessment techniques have identified certain demographical characteristics of the adult students in that Program and these have been summarized here. (For a more complete record, see Appendix B).

UESP Student Characteristics

Of the 812 students enrolled in UESP in the Fall, 1974-75 term, 302 returned the Background Information Form. Of those, 76% had never taken an independent study course before and 59% had either never had a college level course or had less than two years of higher education.

The average age of the UESP students for that term was thirty-two (32) and this figure is consistent with that for previous terms. You will note that although there are 45% of the students in the 21-30 age group, there are 35% in the 31-50 groups.

	AGE GROUP					
	0-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+
Number of Students	22	135	65	39	13	4
Percentage	7%	45%	22%	13%	4%	1%

TABLE 2: AGE BREAKDOWN FOR UESP STUDENTS, FALL '74-'75

The reasons cited for taking courses through UESP rather than through the on-campus programs include:

REASON	# OF STUDENTS	% OF STUDENTS
1. Too far to travel to campus	52	17%
2. Time conflict between on-campus courses and individual schedule	108	36%
3. Family responsibilities	107	35%
4. Work schedule does not permit on-campus classes	127	42%
5. Prefer learning independently	56	19%
6. Course not offered elsewhere	40	13%

TABLE 3: REASONS CITED BY STUDENTS FOR TAKING A COURSE THROUGH UESP RATHER THAN THROUGH A REGULAR ON CAMPUS PROGRAM

The numerical and anecdotal data on UESP student characteristics indicates that this is a population new in some respects to the higher education scene and certainly new to the mode of independent study.

Impact of A New Population On the Role of the Curriculum Specialist In Higher Education

The demands of this new higher education student population are readily apparent in terms of both specific content needs[8] and administrative needs.[9] However, if one examines the field of learning and instructional

research, it becomes apparent that the bulk of this research deals with both the traditional student and with traditional modes of education. Although the curriculum experts are skilled in the knowledge and application of these principles, there is little basis for assuming that these same principles can or should be applied in the design of curricula for a new student population in a new educational situation. Initial research, for example, showed that "Teachers and pupils are more favorable toward the use of instructional television in elementary school than in secondary school and college"[10] but subsequent research with a different student group shows that "Voluntary home students of televised college classes tend to be more favorable toward learning by television than are the students who take these same televised courses in the classroom."[11] This example shows how research findings differ when the subject characters are changed.

The curriculum specialist in the nontraditional higher education setting is faced with a situation of designing instructional materials for a new student population and cannot automatically assume that the research based principles and generalizations of the field will transfer to meet the educational needs and characteristics of this new population.

ISSUE #2: The Role Of The Curriculum Specialist As Process Expert

As described earlier, the curriculum specialist in UESP provides the instructional design and coordination expertise for the development effort. The content or subject matter expertise is provided by the faculty members who will teach the particular course. This responsibility for process expertise alone is unique when compared with the traditional specialist roles. As discussed above, the specialist has traditionally had some content expertise in the area of development or is responsible

more for curriculum selection than actual development. Rarely is the specialist required, in these positions, to develop instructional materials in a content area with which he or she is unfamiliar.

In a program like ULSP however, the curriculum expert is required to work on the development of courses in a wide variety of subject areas.[12] Some of these areas, particularly in continuing higher education, are technical or highly specialized disciplines. UESP, for example, has developed courses in physics, psychology, calculus and German. This diversity of course offerings requires, of the curriculum specialist:

a) a knowledge of basic design and development techniques that he or she can apply for any given content area, and

b) the ability to communicate specific design needs and techniques so that the faculty member (or content expert) can both comprehend the necessary communication and apply specified methods to his/her particular content area.

This first requirement is rather self-explanatory and refers to methodological skills in design and development based on the research and practice in the field. (One ramification of this requirement was discussed in Issue #1, previously.) The second requirement, however, needs some further explanation. It is probably easy for the reader to envision a situation where the curriculum coordinator of a public school is describing one process of component analysis to a third grade math teacher. The coordinator might explain, for example, how one would analyze a student task such as "being able to add two digit numbers" to identify all the component skills for this behavior. It is more difficult however, to envision that coordinator describing the same process to the physicist to explain how the component skills would be identified for application of the First Law of Thermodynamics. In the first example, the specialist's familiarity with the subject matter enables her to provide exemplars of the process that are immediately relevant to the instructor,

i.e. exemplars with few irrelevant attributes. In the second situation, the faculty member must transfer unsophisticated examples (those with many irrelelvant attributes) to highly sophisticated subject matter or skills. The UESP faculty member as described previously is usually untrained in curriculum design theory and methodology. The curriculum expert, therefore, is responsible for being able to help the faculty member to apply such methodology without the benefit of content expertise from which to draw examples in the area of application.

ISSUE #3: The Role Status Of the Curriculum Specialist in Higher Education

In the previous examination of the traditional curriculum specialist role, it was noted that the role usually carries both expert and supervisory authority in the traditional settings. The public school curriculum director, for example, is considered to be in an administrative role with some degree of authority over teachers who may work on any given curriculum project. This is also characteristic when a Project Director or Project Assistant in an R & D center works with a teacher group in the design of curriculum innovations.

As noted in both of the preceding examples, the specialist is seen as a supervisor and the person being supervised is the teacher -- usually in primary or secondary education. As Cogan notes in his recent text on clinical supervision, the role of "student" to the supervisor as "teacher" ".... is frequently rejected by teachers who perceive themselves as competent professionals."[13]

In UESP, the typical faculty member to date has been recognized within the University as highly respected in his or her specialized fields. (In the earliest stages of the Program, an effort was made to recruit high quality faculty members as one means for ensuring high educational standards consistent with the on-campus programs.) In

nearly every case, the faculty member had been teaching the course that he developed for UESP as an on-campus course for several terms. As an on-campus course, the faculty person had designed and taught the course independently so long as it met the requirement of the particular department for which it was designed. There is little doubt that the faculty members in UESP "perceive themselves as competent professionals". The curriculum specialist in UESP and other higher education settings therefore faces the same challenge as the supervisor in the public school setting, i.e. to develop a "colleagual relationship"[14] with the faculty in the developmental task. Cogan also points out, however, that

> ...if we examine supervision in schools and universities we commonly observe an implicit but fully functioning superior-subordinate relationship generated by institutional hierarchies.[15]

Since the role of curriculum specialist in a developmental effort in higher education is a new one, the "superior" or "subordinate" status of the role has not yet been defined as it has for the traditional role.

The specialists at UESP have observed that most of the faculty members with whom they work do not have an understanding of either the specialists' training or the specialists' function in the development task when they enter the program.

The task of the curriculum specialist in higher education seems to be to define this new role in terms of the type of working relationship that is effective with university faculty in a development situation that is also new to the higher education setting. Perhaps the potential for developing a "colleagual relationship" is greater in this setting as it is as yet unfettered by a highly ingrained level of status.

Conclusions

As mentioned earlier in this paper, a major purpose for the description and analysis contained here is for the further specification of the needs and requirements for this role in higher education. The following conclusions and recommendations will hopefully contribute to that process, at least for the particular Program described here and perhaps for similar programs having a similar instructional component:

Regarding Issue #1: A New Student Population

1. The curriculum specialist, in a nontraditional higher education setting like UESP, should have an interest and skills in basic research.

2. The setting for this new role in higher education should provide opportunity and encouragement for research activities.

3. The specialist should conduct on-going research and evaluation to provide a theoretical and practical repertoire of information for this new role.

4. The curriculum specialist in this setting should attempt to distribute information regarding this role through formal or informal publications.

Regarding Issue #2: Specialized Discipline Areas

1. The curriculum specialist should be trained in basic design and development skills that are applicable accross discipline areas; that training should require application in a variety of disciplines and not just the area in which he or she has specialized.

2. The curriculum specialist in this setting should design methods and procedures to communicate necessary information to faculty that will enable the faculty member to comprehend and apply that information.

Regarding Issue #3: Status of the Role

1. The curriculum specialist should take actions to inform university faculty members of the nature and scope of the training, skills and functions of this new role.

2. The curriculum specialist should have training in interaction and supervisory skills that are applicable where role status has not yet been defined.

3. The specialist in the higher education setting should attempt to develop a colleagual relationship with the faculty member or members of a development team.

Although this list of conclusions and recommendations represent needs recognized for this new role in UESP, it is limited to the specific issues presented here. Many of the characteristics that distinguish this role from the traditional curriculum specialist role have yet to be identified as new positions emerge in higher education.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. See:

   (a) "Report on Higher Education", Newman Commission, Stanford University, 1971.

   (b) Stanley Moses, "The Learning Force: A More Comprehensive Framework for Educational Policy", Occasional Papers No. 25, October 1971.

   (c) John W.C. Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera, "Volunteers for Learning: A Study of the Educational Pursuits of American Adults", Chicago, Aldim Publishing Company, 1965.

2. For a report on Program goals and capabilities see:

   (a) "Report of the Chancellor's Task Force On External Studies", University of Pittsburgh, January 1973.

   (b) "UESP Statement of Goals and Objectives", University External Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh.

3. From a study conducted by Helen Hazi at the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Curriculum and Supervision, 1974-75, not yet published.

4. "Final Report On Project To Design New Patterns For Training R & D Personnel In Education", 1970, Pittsburgh: Learning Research and Development Center.

5. Noreen M. Garman and Carol M. Jacko, "Role Theory: A Useful Construct For the Teacher as Instructional Designer", a paper presented at Association of Teacher Educators Conference, New Orleans, 1975, p.6.

6. See Reference #3 on Hazi study.

7. (a) Furniss, W. Todd, "Degrees for Nontraditional Students", American Council of Education Special Report, Washington D.C., April 9 1971.

   (b) "College Credit for Off-Campus Study: Report 8", ERIC Clearninghouse On Higher Education, Washington D.C., March, 1971.

8. "Diversity By Design", A report on the major findings in the Commission of Non-Traditional Study, 1973, shows the following content choices. The percentages are the percent of adults not engaged in full-time study who say they would like to learn more about the subjects.

WHAT ADULTS WOULD LIKE TO STUDY

	Total choices	First choice
Vocational subjects (architecture, business skills, commercial art, computer science, cosmetology, education and teacher training, engineering, industrial trades, journalism, law, management skills, medicine and dentistry, nursing, salesmanship, technical skills)	78.2%	43.0%
Hobbies and recreation (crafts, fine and visual arts, flight training, performing arts, safety, sports and games, travel and living in foreign countries)	62.8%	13.4%
Home and family life (child development, gardening and flower arranging, home repairs, sewing and cooking)	56.0%	12.0%
Personal development (investment, occult sciences, personal psychology, physical fitness and self-development, public speaking)	54.3%	6.8%
General education (basic education, biological sciences, creative writing, English-language training, Great Books, humanities, languages, physical sciences, social sciences)	47.9%	12.6%
Public affairs (citizenship, community problems and organizations, consumer education, environmental studies, public affairs)	36.3%	4.5%
Religious studies	15.4%	3.0%
Agriculture and farming	10.9%	2.9%

9. See, for example, the list of functions proposed by Jack N. Arbolino and John R. Valley in "Continuing Education", October 1970, p.6.

10. Adler, Richard and Walter S. Baer, "Aspen Notebook: Cable and Continuing Education", October 1970, p.6.

11. Ibid., p. 135.

12. Some of the content areas that have been developed in UESP are urban management, economics, math, calculus, physics, English and library science.

13. Cogan, Morris L., Clinical Supervision, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1973, p. 60.

14. Ibid., p.69.

15. Ibid., p. 59.

Appendix A

UESP Curriculum Speicalist Compentencies

[This list is still in the process of being completed. Copies will be available during the 1975 AERA conference.]

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL BIFS *
Fall 1974-75

TOTAL NUMBER RETURNED: 302

MARITAL STATUS: Single--112 (37%) Married--188 (62%)

SEX: Male--126 (42%) Female--176 (58%)

AVERAGE AGE: 32 AVERAGE NO. OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 10: 1.7

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION:
High School--66 (22%)
College (1-2 yrs.)--112 (37%)
College (3-4 yrs.)--65 (22%)
Technical, Nursing, Business, etc. School--36 (12%)
Post-Baccalaureate: 41 (14%)
Doctorate: 2 (.7%)

DEGREES EARNED:
Associate in Applied Science--1 (.3%)
Associate in Arts--28 (9%)
Associate in Science--2 (.7%)
Bachelor of Arts--24 (8%)
Bachelor of Science--32 (11%)
Masters--20 (7%)
Ph.D.--2 (.7%)

REASONS FOR NOT TAKING COURSE THROUGH REGULAR ON-CAMPUS PROGRAM:

Too far to travel to campus--52 (17%)
Time conflict between on-campus courses and individual schedule--108 (36%)
Family responsibilities--107 (35%)
Work schedule does not permit on-campus classes--127 (42%)
Prefer learning independently--56 (19%)
Course not offered elsewhere--40 (13%)

NUMBER ENROLLED IN ANY COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY PRIOR TO THIS TERM:

Enrolled--195 (65%)
Not enrolled--91 (30%)

REASONS FOR ENROLLING:

Personal Enrichment--98 (33%)
Pursuing an Undergraduate Degree--174 (58%)
Pursuing a Graduate Degree--174 (58%)
Job Advancement--85 (28%)
Certification--51 (17%)
Socialization--6 (2%)

PRIMARY AREAS OF STUDY:
Administration of Justice--42 (14%)
Business Administration--42 (14%)
Chemistry--1 (.3%)
Economics--11 (4%)
Education--52 (17%)
Engineering--14 (5%)
English--9 (3%)
Fine Arts--3 (1%)

* Prepared by Patricia Shuler at University External Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh.

History--12 (4%)
Languages--7 (2%)
Library Science--46 (15%)
Mathematics--10 (3%)
Nursing--4 (1%)
Pharmacy--1 (.3%)
Physics--1 (.3%)
Political Science--1 (.3%)
Psychology--35 (12%)
Religion--1 (.3%)
Social Work--12 (4%)
Sociology--6 (2%)
Urban Management--13 (4%)

PLANS FOR FUTURE COURSES: Take UESP courses only--60 (20%)
Take on-campus as well as UESP courses--146 (48%)
Undecided--98 (32%)

NUMBER WHO HAVE TAKEN INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES BEFORE: Yes--54 (18%)
No--228 (76%)

PREFERRED MATERIALS FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY: (Percentage base = 54)
Books--45 (83%)
Television--10 (19%)
Audio Cassettes--19 (35%)
Radio--5 (9%)
Workbooks--45 (83%)

AVERAGE HOURS PER WEEK FOR STUDY TIME: 11.9

ACCESSIBLE STUDY ITEMS: Cassette Recorder--182 (60%)
Television--287 (95%)
Radio--293 (97%)
Record Player--273 (90%)
Telephone--296 (98%)

PREFERRED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: Lectures--192 (64%)
Class Discussion--211 (70%)
Media Presentations--192 (64%)
Question & Answer--146 (48%)
Small Group Activities--146 (48%)

AGE GROUPS

0--20	21--30	31--40	41--50	51--60	60+
22	135	65	39	13	4
(7%)	(45%)	(22%)	(13%)	(4%)	(1%)

CHANGES IN MARKETING INFORMATION:

Press Ad--46 (increased by 2)
Flyer Sent to Home--44 (increased by 3)
Flyer Sent to Library--34 (inc. by 7)
Friend--12 (inc. by 2)
Press Article--17 (increased by 1)
Flyer Sent to School--20 (inc. by 5)
UESP Student--39 (inc. by 2)